ALLEN GRIFFIN

Early Playboy, War Hero
Founder, Publisher, Editor
Monterey Peninsula Herald

"THE COLONEL"

The Peninsula's Most Important Leader

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outreach, employed a full time, permanent director, became the Community Foundation for Monterey County and has expanded its endowment from $200,000 in 1981 to forty one million dollars in 1997!

LEADERSHIP AND THE HERALD

Saving some adobes, helping a young man help others and helping save Point Lobos, are fine works but hardly qualify the conclusion of his having had the most "significant and profound impact on the culture, the environment, the aesthetics; the quality of the Monterey Peninsula, its spirit and the integrity and vitality of its key institutions." What else did Allen Griffin do? How is the Monterey Peninsula different and better because of him?

First, Griffin had to be sure that his prominently displayed opinions were read and that attention and due respect were paid to them. He did this by establishing one of the best, if not the best, local newspaper in the country. (In 1986 Griffin was posthumously elected to the California Newspaper Hall of Fame.) He recruited, trained and maintained a superb staff of reporters and editors, some with international reputations when they came; others who gained distinction by their work for the Herald. He maintained a close relationship with his reporters; they were his access to everything happening; his eyes and ears on the community. Herald reporters had a comprehensive knowledge of their assigned areas and developed expertise in the subjects for which they were responsible: education, local government, business, civic organizations, the private non profit sector, cultural activities and social and recreational activities. Griffin not only pursued excellence; he demanded and achieved it. The Herald was such an excellent paper that it was the only daily paper one needed to keep up with local, national and international news and events.

Once Griffin had established himself and his paper as the "herald," and "clarion" of the community he then used the paper and his power and prestige to play roles as an idea man, catalyst, project sponsor, financier, participant in key community organizations, opponent to "bad ideas," and spark plug and cheerleader for "good ideas"

GRIFFIN AND EDUCATION

MONTEREY PENINSULA COLLEGE

Along with Remsen Bird, Griffin worked to establish a community college (originally called a junior college) for the Monterey Peninsula. There was an ideal location for such a college in Monterey. The site was owned by Del Monte Properties Company. Griffin tried to interest S.F.B. Morse, the founder, president and principal shareholder of the Company in the

idea of a community college. Griffin suggested that the Company should sell the property to the Monterey School District for this purpose. Morse reportedly evidenced little interest in the project until Griffin, in his typical style, emphatically said: "Sam, it is not a matter of whether we have a Junior College in Monterey, we WILL have a college. The issue is whether we have an excellent college, it's up to you!" This had the desired effect. The Company sold the property to the School District. Monterey Peninsula College (MPC) is now, not only one of the best Community Colleges in the State, but it also has an ideal location and a beautiful campus.

When MPC found it necessary to expand its facilities to accommodate the growing population Griffin used his connections and prestige to bring famous architects Edward Larrabee Barnes, Phillip Johnson and Kevin Roach to the Peninsula to work with distinguished local architect, Fred Keeble, who was the architect-planner for the College.

The master plan for the college proposed an amphitheater, in the canyon adjacent to the new theater building. It was a "natural" (excuse the pun) and an object of enthusiasm for the architects and residents who perceived the College as the intellectual and cultural center of the Peninsula. The College community visualized commencements and exciting outdoor performances there.

When the final plans for expansion of the College were shown to Griffin he blurted, "Where is the Amphitheater?" The College President, George (Bob) Faul said, "We can't afford it!" "Why not!" Griffin demanded. "After doing the "essential" items we only had $10,000 left in the budget. The bid for the amphitheater was $80,000" Faul explained. Griffin wrote a check for $70,000, handed it to Faul, and said. "The Amphitheater is essential; build it! But no one is to know where the money came from!"

Griffin was always available when MPC needed help, offering personal financial support for needed items, supporting bond issues and being a community resource when the going got tough. When some Black students suggested that MPC was not responsive to their needs, Griffin quietly organized community forums where concerns of the Black community could be discussed and complaints of the Black Student's Union could be vented. As a result of his efforts, his close relationship with President Faul, and their mutual desire to make every effort to have MPC meet the needs of all components of the community, MPC had few problems during a turbulent period.

THE ALLEN GRIFFIN TEACHING AWARDS

Having benefited from excellent teachers, having "stood on the shoulders of giants," teachers who enabled him to achieve remarkable success,

Griffin established an Endowment with the Community Foundation, to annually recognize and reward teachers who have been nominated by their peers for outstanding achievement in their profession.

MONTEREY INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Griffin was one of the founders of the Monterey Institute of International Studies (originally Monterey Institute for Foreign Studies). While the Institute is now a distinguished academic institution, with a prestigious international reputation, its early history reads like a bad novel. Its vision was impeccable. In the dynamic new post war world, the need for its offerings was compelling! It was vitally needed, and in the right place at the right time. It only lacked coherent, effective management and leadership and essential financing, without which it was destined for inevitable failure. Griffin's tenacity, sustaining financial support and "never give up" attitude, along with other local stalwarts enabled the Institute to survive what, in retrospect, appears to be an impossible ascent of Mount Everest in an historic blizzard with frequent avalanches.

YORK SCHOOL

Griffin did not ignore secondary education. He made sure that Herald reporters kept abreast of what was happening in the public schools, and took positions on educational issues and candidates for local school boards.

Although he was a product of the public secondary school system he realized that there was a place for small private "prep" schools. So when he was presented with a vision of a small, local, secondary school which would seek out the best talent in the area, regardless of economic status, race, religion or ethnic background and offer scholarships which would make the best education available to such students, including small classes and inspired teachers, he "signed up!" He was a member of the founding board of York School, and an active participant in finding an ideal location for this special school. York School, with the inspiration and support of local leaders such as Griffin and Lewis Fenton, has achieved a remarkable distinction in producing outstanding graduates who have been admitted to and who have achieved distinction in the best universities in the country and have gone on to distinguished service in both the public and private sector.

Griffin endowed a Chair at Stanford for a Professor of Military History. Had Griffin been a lesser person, seeking recognition and fame, he would have named it the Allen Griffin Chair of Military History; not inappropriate considering his heroic military record and his love of being a soldier. But he endowed the chair in honor of Admiral Spruance, one of the great heroes of the Second World War and a friend of Griffin.